



# Pigeon Tracks

## American Racing Pigeon Union

Winter 2011/2012

Inside this issue:

**Pigeons in the Classroom** 2  
By Whitney Sabrowsky, AU Youth Ambassador

**Get Ready!! It's Time For the 2012 AU National Youth Race** 4

**15th Annual Youth National Race Application Form** 5

**Teen wins write-in mayoral campaign he didn't start** 6

**Promoting Our Sport** 7  
By Rich Ross

**Contact Information** Back



test and was unsuccessful. Now during his last year as a junior flyer, 18 year-old Tommy decided to give the membership contest one last try. He was shocked when he received the news that he had won the electronic Benzing clock donated by Ed Minvielle and Siegel's Pigeon Supply as representatives of the Benzing Company.

Continued on page 6

### IMPORTANT NOTICE:

We will stop printing the paper *PIGEON TRACKS* in April 2012. It will continue to be posted on the website under the [Junior Members](#) page under [Info & Events](#). If you prefer receiving a paper copy, please contact our office. 1-800-755-2778.

## 2011 Junior Winners

By: Whitney Sabrowsky, AU Youth Ambassador

Every year the AU offers opportunities for junior flyers to demonstrate their talents. Congratulations to all of the winners; your hard work has paid off.

### Youth Race Winner

13 year-old Thomas Strand enjoys his racing homers. He has had pigeons for one and a half years and flies with the Thunderbird 4-H



Photo by: PHILIP A. DWYER  
THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

racing club of Washington. Thomas spends a lot of time with his flock of 55 birds all of which he calls by

name. The pigeons know they are special when their fancier treats them to daily peanuts. Thomas's dedicated care was rewarded when he received the announcement that his young bird had won the AU Youth Race being held in Arizona.

Thomas mentioned that the guys in his club have complimented him on his knack for choosing good pigeons. He says that he will hold a pigeon and examine it. Somehow he just has a feeling that the bird will turn out to be a successful pigeon. Well, when Thomas sent the young cock he called "Rob Roy" to the Youth Race, he certainly was correct in his prediction of the bird's future. Thomas is eagerly anticipating being a guest of honor at the 2012 AU Convention in California. Congratulations Thomas!

### Youth Membership Contest Winner

Six years ago, Tommy Sokolowski entered the essay con

# Pigeons in the Classroom

By: Whitney Sabrowsky, AU Youth Ambassador

Getting kids interested in pigeons is the only way to ensure that our racing sport will continue on through the years. So often though, the racing pigeon sport is kept quiet because flyers tend to stay in their lofts instead of reaching out to promote their hobby. As pigeon fanciers, we need to be concerned about the future of our beloved sport. Growth cannot occur if the seeds are not planted in young people.

at the school's annual Veteran's Day program by Mrs. Dank. Mary had heard about the AU's program of Reaching Out to Veterans and thought that integrating a pigeon release into a school's Veteran's Day program would be a perfect way to both honor veterans and expose children to the wonders of homing pigeons. The committee organizing the veteran's program approved the idea of having a pigeon release as the finale.



Mary to assist at the school with the presentation. We were very excited at the prospect of being able to promote our sport in such a manner.

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, our pigeon presentation was given in the school's gymnasium; kindergarten through sixth grade (with the exception of the fifth graders who were away on a field trip) was involved with the event. The kids were enchanted by



Paul Reichert wanted the kids to understand the story behind the birds released for the Veteran's day program and requested that the pigeons visit his classroom. The principal, Sheri

## The pigeons go to school

Mary Dank of Sartell, Minnesota is married to a lifelong pigeon fancier, Jim. She is a retired school teacher who still helps out at various elementary schools. After years of being around Jim's pigeons, it seems as if Mary has caught a mild case of the pigeon fever from her husband.

Lately Mrs. Dank has been involved with Clearview Elementary School of Clearwater, MN. Fellow Clearview teacher, Paul Reichert, found out that Mary's husband kept racing homers and was fascinated at the prospect of a pigeon sport. Mr. Reichert wanted to somehow bring pigeons into the school.

Mr. Reichert was introduced to the idea of having a pigeon release

Rutar, was enthusiastic about the Veteran's Day plans and agreed with Mr. Reichert that the kids should learn about pigeons before the program. The Danks were planning on meeting Mr. Reichert's 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class, but the plans suddenly experienced expo-

ponential growth and now Jim and Mary were going to educate the entire elementary school about racing pigeons.

Jim Dank and I fly pigeons together in the Mid Minnesota RPC. I was happy to be invited by Jim and



Sheri Rutar- principal, Whitney Sabrowsky, and Jim Dank

the birds. They were spell bound as we told them about keeping and racing pigeons. At the first appearance of one of my birds, a kid called out,

Continued on following page

## Pigeons in the Classroom, continued from previous page.

"Is it real?" I had to chuckle and confirm that it was indeed a living breathing pigeon.

We did the presentation several times as the kids attended by grade, 566 students in all. Jim talked about the history of pigeons and commented about racing. One of Mary's contributions was a fantastic Power



Point that helped illustrate the talking points. I was able to share a more personal side of the hobby by bringing some of my favorite birds and telling their stories. My white cock, named Joshua, hasn't really made it as a racer, but he has found his purpose as the perfect bird for promotional events. His big personality made him a hit with the children. In front of about a hundred kids, Joshua gobbled up peanuts from my hand. The kids responded with hysterical laughter.

Each kid had the opportunity to pet a bird as they left the program. I was amused at the variety of comments I received by the students. Many of the girls exclaimed that the pigeons "sparkled" because of the green and purplish sheen. One little boy told me that he "hated hawks

because they kill pigeons." Another student asked me, "Where can I buy pigeons, are they sold at the pet store?"

Following the presentation, Jim, Mary and I were invited to a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom to spend a little more time with the students. The kids were excited to receive a personal visit from the pigeons and were buzzing with questions. They remembered my white cock, Joshua, and were eager to see him up close. Jim and I demonstrated how to hold a pigeon and then the students got a chance to actually hold a bird by themselves. Joshua was on his best behavior while he was passed around.

A touching part of my experience at Clearview Elementary was when I was invited to reach out to a young blind and deaf student who was also afflicted with Cerebral Palsy. The little boy's teacher desperately wanted him to touch the pigeons. Patience and persistence finally paid off when the boy reached out and gingerly stroked my pigeon. I saw a fleeting smile as he felt the smooth feathers for the first time. Pigeons truly speak all languages.

### The Veteran's Day program

A sunny and crisp Minnesota day dawned on November 11<sup>th</sup>; perfect weather for the Veteran's Day pigeon release. About 600 school children and 100 parents and staff were present for the Clearview Elementary Veteran's Ceremony. The

program began with words from a Navy officer; she gave a moving speech on how veterans have made sacrifices for freedom because of their great love for America.

Mary Dank delivered a heartfelt message about the symbolism of releasing homing pigeons on Veteran's Day. She spoke of how pigeons were used in combat and told the story of the heroic army bird, CherAmi. Mrs. Dank's speech ended with, "The birds fly free, doing what they love to do. Reminding us that we live free, with the opportunity to do things we love because veterans have earned and protected the freedom we have as citizens of the United States of America." Every time we fly our pigeons, we should remember those words.

Before the retiring of the colors, Jim Dank released three white pigeons to symbolize Love, Peace, and Hope. After the white



birds circled three times, Jim released 18 multi-colored pigeons to represent the soldier platoons making up the diverse American troops.

Continued on page 4

# GET READY!! IT'S TIME FOR THE 2012 AU NATIONAL YOUTH RACE!

Karen Clifton, Executive Director

The American Racing Pigeon Union is the only pigeon organization that offers a national race for youth. We are proud of our junior members and are excited to recognize them for their participation. The 15<sup>th</sup> annual AU National Youth Race is this year!

The race will be held during the AU Convention in LaMirada, CA. Mr. Jose Yanez of the Compton club will be the loft handler. The race will be 213 miles from Fresno, California and is open to all AU junior members.

Each competitor will receive a certificate and the top ten will be mounted on a handsome plaque. The top place will receive the plaque and a trophy. Additionally, he or she is invited to attend the 2013 AU convention as our guest!

Applications should be signed by a parent or legal guardian and returned to the office by no later than **March 1, 2012**. As soon as applications are received, we will send notification advising of shipping details. **Applications must be received prior to shipment for entry into the race.**

We hope you will participate and look forward to hearing from you soon!

Application on page 5



## Pigeons in the Classroom, Continued from page 3

America the Beautiful played in the background while 21 pigeons circled in the blue sky. It was at this moment when one realized how precious freedom truly is. Jim said, "When the next song began, the Battle Hymn of the Republic, the birds, as if knowing exactly what to do, departed."

### Conclusions

Sharing pigeons with the students of Clearview School was a great opportunity to educate young people about our uncommon sport.

Participation in the veteran's ceremony was an honor. Mary can be applauded for her help in organizing the presentation and also for writing an excellent speech for the ceremony.

The Clearview Elementary staff is so enthused about pigeons that they are looking into the possibility of building a loft on the school grounds. They feel that the students would benefit by caring for living, breathing birds. Kids would be able to observe the life cycle of pigeons and learn responsibility.

Teaching youngsters about our incredible pigeons is a rewarding

experience; I highly recommend contacting your local school to get involved with promoting the sport to children. Start out by visiting one class - sit down with the kids and tell stories about your pigeons, they will love it. Each child will remember something about the day when the pigeons were at school. Plant the seeds in hope of that someday they will sprout. One bit of advice, be sure that the birds you bring to school have names. The kids will ask!

## 15th Annual Youth National Race APPLICATION FORM

The AU "Youth National Race" is open to all AU junior members. The race will be held during the 2012 AU Convention in LaMirada, CA. Race day will be November 15, 2012. Please print the following:

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CLUB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby indicate that I wish to participate in the 2012 AU "National Youth Race". I also understand that participation is limited and my name may or may not be randomly drawn. I certify that any 2012 young bird I may enter in the "National Youth Race" has been raised and cared for by me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I plan to attend.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will be unable to attend, but  
am excited to enter a bird.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to have my bird returned  
after the race. (Cost of shipping to be  
coordinated through handler.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature – Junior Member)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature – Parent or Guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Return this application form to the AU national office. It must be mailed to arrive by March 1, 2012.  
Mail to: **American Racing Pigeon Union, Inc. P.O. Box 18465, Oklahoma City, OK 73154**



*GOOD LUCK!*

# Teen wins write-in mayoral campaign he didn't start

AU Junior in the news

<http://www.wistv.com/story/16014207/teen-wins-write-in-mayoral-campaign-he-didnt-start#>

Posted: Nov 10, 2011 10:34 PM CST / Updated: Nov 10, 2011 10:35 PM CST

ARDALE, IA (KWVL/NBC) - An Iowa high school senior now holds the title mayor-elect.

Voters in Aredale cast 24 write-in votes for 18-year-old Jeremy Minnier. It was enough to defeat the incumbent mayor, who got just eight votes.

That might seem like low voter turnout, but in Aredale, that's more than 40 percent of the town's residents.

Minnier didn't even initiate the write-in campaign.

"There was a group of people that had an ad put in our local paper that just said to write me in on Nov. 8. And I didn't really think much of it," Minnier said.

Minnier hopes the community will continue to stand behind him, showing that even at 18, you can be a leader.

"A lot of people think 18-year-olds are too young, you can't handle it. You're not interested in that stuff. Well, that's false. There's a lot of kids, young adults that are interested in this stuff. And we're the future," Minnier said. In the small community of Aredale,



there's not much to boast about. There's a post office, a couple of bars, and a bank.

It's a place where you can literally walk down the middle of Main Street in the middle of the day.

Mayor-elect Minnier still thinks he can accomplish big things here.

Then maybe the mayor-to-be can encourage other young people to consider staying in their home communities to keep small Iowa towns like Aredale alive.

Minnier will officially begin his four-year mayoral term after being sworn in this January. He's following in his dad's footsteps, who is a former town mayor and city councilman.

The teen plans to continue living at home with his parents next year and commuting to college so he can take on the city's top job.

## 2011 Junior Winners

Continued from front page.

Tommy has been flying pigeons for 13 years and is one of the 60 members racing in the Northside Concourse of Chicago, Illinois. His dad is his partner and they race up to 500 miles.

The essay topic of the 2011 contest was "What is the single most important thing about your pigeons that you would want other people to know?" The theme of Tommy's essay was that pigeons are more than just racing birds; they are friends. Parts of the winning essay are shared below.

"I think that it is extremely important for people to understand the tremendous intelligence that pigeons possess, there is more to pigeons than their intelligence... their intelligence is displayed during races, but there is a whole other world that takes its course throughout the week. During the week I live with my pigeons and take care of them, spending much

time with them.... Just walking in and seeing their heads perk up brings joy. I get to know my pigeons personally. Every pigeon has their own character, and each one has something special about them. I get the privilege of watching a pigeon grow from birth into a mature pigeon, and watch the ways they change and learn new things."

Tommy continues, "Overall, there's more to pigeons than just racing them. There's a love for the birds, and a relationship that is built between you and the pigeon. Whenever I need to take time off, I know that I can just go to my pigeon coop and instantly be calmed by the cooing and just watching the pigeons. Although it's great racing pigeons, there's one thing for sure: I got a friend in them."

The companionship that pigeons offer is certainly one of the best things that we share with those

who are not in the hobby. Tommy can be applauded for his well-written essay.

### Art Contest Winners

The winning art of junior members is used in sport promotion. The 2011 challenge was to create an impression that best represents how you most like to watch your pigeons. This year Carlos and Hector Duran of Arizona tied for first place. As their prize, they have a choice of an AU t-shirt or a free one-year AU junior membership.

# PROMOTING OUR SPORT

By Rich Ross

Anytime people ask me to share something about racing pigeons I jump at the chance to tell them about our great sport. I got a phone call from Cornerstone Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brighton, Michigan. They were having a Vacation Bible School summer program and the theme was "Isn't God Creative". They asked me if I would do a presentation about racing pigeons, how unique they are, how far they fly and anything else I thought the kids would like to hear about.

Judy and I met with the program director, Rachel Brown, to find out more details about the presentation. The program was set up in 2 sessions one for ages 4-7 and then 8-12 year olds. I asked Rachel how many kids would be there and when she said 500, I almost fell off the chair. She also asked if I could do a release for the kids after each session.

The next question threw me a curve. Rachel asked if we ever did power point. I didn't know if power point was a soft drink or a singing group. No big deal Rachel said it's real easy and she would help me. The presentation was set for Tuesday, June 21<sup>st</sup> at 9 AM

As we were riding back home in the car I told Judy wow 500 kids, I've never done anything like this before. Judy's words of wisdom were "talk from your heart and tell them what you love about the sport. Maybe there's a future flyer out there that you could en-

courage in the sport".

As soon as I got back home I called the AU for help. The AU has always been a great help. They asked what kind of program and how many kids. When I told them 500, they said no problem we can do that. They sent me coloring books, word search puzzles and lot of information about the famous GI Joe pigeon for the kids to take



home.. So if you want to promote our sport SOS the AU national office.

To give the kids a visual idea, I took pictures of the eggs hatching right up to the full grown bird for the power point presentation. Judy planned to do the first part of the program showing the hatching of these eggs, the babies at 1 week, 2 weeks all the way up to 4 weeks. The kids were amazed at how fast the birds grew. Then I would do the 2<sup>nd</sup> part with a bird in my hand showing them the wings and explaining how God designed them so unique that they could stay in the air for hours at a time and find there way back to the loft.

JUNE 21<sup>st</sup> Presentation Day

- Judy & I got there early with the birds. We were hooked up with the microphones and shown how to do power point on the big screen. All of a sudden the doors opened and kids came charging in. The kids and teachers were amazed at how fast the babies grew as we shared how creative God is. I held one of the birds in my hand and as I opened the wing one of the small feathers fell out. One of the boys ran to get the feather and gave it to me to put back into the bird. I told him he could keep the feather because I didn't have any crazy glue.

I asked if they had any questions. 50 hands went up. I thought to myself PLEASE make the questions easy. They wanted to know what color the birds come in, what do they eat, where do they live, do pigeons have eyes, etc. One girl asked how do they find there way home. I told her they have God's GPS system. One boy asked if pigeons can fly faster the Road Runner. What do you say to that one. I said it depends if it's day or night. He looked at me a little puzzled so I quickly went to the next question.

At the end of each session we took the kids outside to do the release. I took one of the birds out of the basket and walked around and let the kids touch the wings.

Continued on back page

## American Racing Pigeon Union

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GI Joe  
American Hero

## PROMOTING OUR SPORT continued from page 7

Even the adults had their hands out to touch the birds. Everyone was so excited. We formed a semi-circle around the basket and did the countdown, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, blast-off. The kids cheered as the birds were released.

As we were walking back to the building there were more questions. They wanted to know if the birds would come back to the basket, how long before they get home, do they get lost. Several of the adults said they now look at birds differently.

All in all Judy and I had a great time sharing our sport with both the kids and the teachers.

*Getting ready to do power point presentation*



**Rich & Judy Ross**